

East Linton Primary School – Parent Council
General Meeting
22nd April 2021, 7pm online

Present: Lyn Jardine (Chair), Gill Gardner (Head Teacher), Margaret McKay (Principal Teacher/P6), Stacey Walker (Teacher P5), Heather McDonald (Teacher P7), Jane Perkins (Treasurer), Leigh Pleasance (P5), Madeleine Hewlett (P6), Deborah Stitt(P2/3 & Nursery), Becca Bell (P1), Evie Thomas (P3), Tara Wright, Kathryn Neill (P4)
Norman Hampshire (Councillor), Paul McLennan (Councillor), Sue Kempson (Councillor), Vera Hoban (Dunpender Community Council), Allison Cosgrove (Dunpender Community Council)

Apologies: Dawn Perdue (P6)

1. Welcome and Introductions

General introductions were made to the three East Lothian Council (ELC) councillors for Dunbar and East Linton Ward and the two members of Dunpender Community Council (DCC).

2. Declarations of Interests

None

3. Concerns to be discussed with community representatives and councillors

Lyn Jardine explained that the Parent Council (PC) were aware of the need for the school to extend and although there had been a community consultation over a year ago the plans to extend the school had not come to fruition and the PC would like to hear the latest plans. There was also concern about the proximity of new railway station to the school and the lack of consultation with the school community.

3.1 Proximity of new railway station & lack of consultation specifically with the school community

Cllr Hampshire explained that the planning application had been submitted by Network Rail for the station, that the location had been known for some time as land was secured on the south side of the railway when Andrew Meikle Grove was built and that it was always known there would need to be access from the north side. He confirmed that the Network Rail identified the location as the only technically feasible option due to bends in the track and that ELC had no involvement in the design of the station. There are limitations inherent in the design due to safety requirements and the need to comply with the Equalities Act legislation. Network Rail is aware of concerns over safety and will be required to take steps to address that. ELC are also aware of concerns over the access route through the park to the north platform and he confirmed that any proposed alterations to that route could be addressed at planning as the path lies within land belonging to ELC. He stated that ELC will take into account views from all bodies and invited a submission from the PC of proposals to improve the current application. He confirmed that Network Rail is pressuring ELC on a quick determination on the application in order to meet the timescale of opening the station by 2024. He also informed the meeting of a proposal to replace the Markle Crossing with a loop road and overbridge near Markle Fisheries. He also hinted at the possibility of a link to the A199.

Cllr McLennan confirmed that the planning consultation period is now closed and referred to a previous public meeting where these issues were raised with Network Rail. He also suggested that Network Rail would be willing to attend a future meeting as they could not be present tonight. Lyn Jardine stated that Alan Brooking from Network Rail has offered to work with the school on rail safety and remediation.

Lyn Jardine asked the DCC representatives about the statutory obligation DCC has to comment on planning application and whether they had thought to consult the school. Vera Hoban raised the point that she has recently joined DCC and having been former pupil at EL Primary and a teacher for many years had a particular interest in the school so asked to join the PC as a conduit for information sharing but her application was turned down. There was a general discussion on the constitution and whether the PC was only open to parents and carers. Allison Cosgrove confirmed that she had previously served as a community rep on the PC and it was generally agreed that if the constitution allowed the PC would be happy to have wider engagement with the community in order to improve communication on issues such as planning. Vera Hoban will serve as a co-opted member going forward.

3.2 Use of school land for access pathway to new station

It was noted that there is a conflict between DCC and the PC about the park land and what it should be used for. The PC agreed to document their concerns over the route of the station access path as part of their submission to ELC.

Cllr McLennan confirmed that public consultation was closed on 27th January and applications are normally determined within 8 weeks but due to the size of the application this has not completed in the normal timescale. Cllr Hampshire confirmed that any non-material alterations would still be considered and advised that a submission from the PC would carry more weight than individual submissions and that the PC should write to both ELC planning and the landscape and countryside department who are responsible for park maintenance. He confirmed that although Network Rail has pledged to look at the issues raised at the public meeting a formal submission from the PC would ensure this was taken seriously. Cllr Kempson raised the point that the path network is very important and should be included in the planning consent to ensure easier enforcement in the case of any issues.

3.3 School extension/replacement options

Lyn Jardine questioned the lack of information following a consultation exercise about an extension to the school when it was identified as beyond the capacity in terms of school role.

Cllr Hampshire indicated that when land was allocated for house building an extension to the school was included in the consent. He also stated that the commitment to have a station by 2024 means there will be a massive demand for more housing. If ELC refuses to allocate land applications will still be submitted by developers and if ELC refuse permission the developers will definitely appeal and may win. He explained that ELC are not willing to fund refurbishment and extension of the existing school to accommodate the current role only to find a new school will be required due to the housing demand. A recent application to the Scottish Government was turned down as all new schools must have community facilities attached such as libraries, health

facilities and other facilities that are available to the community when not required by the school. The next funding application to the Scottish Government needs to include the full design and location. He indicated that the school estates consultation resulted in lots of contributions from East Linton and that there would be a further consultation with the PC and wider community on the makeup and location of a new modern school with high quality community facilities. He confirmed that the local development plan is not aligned with the new houses and development which will come with the station and the school needs to progress quickly so it is likely that the council will propose a site and it will be up to the community to respond with their preferences.

Cllr McLennan agreed to share details of the procedure and timeline of the consultation process and will request that the education department communicate on the outcomes of the school estate consultation and provide details of next steps and indicative timelines.

Tara Wright questioned the urgency as this whole process seemed to be a repeat from 18months ago. Cllr Hampshire clarified that the station opening in 2024 and the resultant demand for housing, which cannot progress without a new school, is driving the urgency.

Lyn Jardine questioned whether DCC had any idea about what should happen to the existing school building in the event of a new school opening. Allison Cosgrove confirmed that DCC are not aware of any plans that ELC might have for the building but that Cllr Hampshire had indicated there would be a public consultation. She also commented that EL is not very well served in terms of school facilities compare to other communities in East Lothian. Vera Hoban confirmed that she responded to the school estate survey on behalf of DCC and that the view was that EL needs a school for the future and suggested that ELC must have a standard template for a new school that can be adapted to meet the community needs. Lyn Jardine agreed that the school estate has faults but commented that the staff is doing tremendous work in a substandard facility.

Gill Gardner explained how much the staff and pupils love the existing building with all its quirks and beautiful outdoor space. She accepted there were blueprints for schools but stated that the school community in East Linton would hate a generic school and hoped that the charm and character of the current building would make its way to new building.

Lyn Jardine expressed a hope that normal PC work could continue to improve the existing outdoor space but timescales for the new school need to be known. She indicated the discussion had been useful and made a plea for the dialogue to continue. ELC councillors agreed to be copied in on future meeting agendas and committed to attend if possible.

After the councillors left the meeting there was general discussion concluding that the mass expansion of East Linton was not welcome and there was a concern that it was not clear at the outset that more development and a new school was inevitable if the station was to progress.

4. Apologies and Approval of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11th March 2021 were approved.

5. Finance Report and Funding Requests

Current balance at 31/03/2021 was £3,310.36 with £775 due in 50/50 cheques and £391.97 due to the school for the Christmas party food and P7 camp deposits (invoice from school now received). So in practice balance is c£2,100. Cheques for the draws are still to be distributed.

50/50 draw numbers for completed months were:

March 2021 - 3, 16, 50

Four historic draws have been repeated as some winners had stopped their 50/50 payments.

November 2020 - number 41 replaced with 17

December 2020 - number 15 replaced with 66

January 2021- number 63 replaced with 9

February 2021 - number 19 replaced with 24

The meeting agreed to provide funding to purchase t-shirts for a P6 tie-dye project.

6. Chair's Update

Lyn Jardine reported CAEL progress with Longstone community garden and planting up a bed near the school and also made everyone aware of the stall at the MART this weekend. She asked if the CAEL wildlife awareness project work can it be incorporated into curriculum.

7. Head Teacher's Update

Gill Gardner reported on P4 involvement with Jo and Michaela from CAEL in sowing seeds and planting in the big bed near the white gates. She confirmed the school would be involved in activities around the trees at back of playground and the Longstone Community Garden and that Tommy Dale has offered to provide free compost to replant the boxes at the front of the school. She confirmed that she will be sending out the calendar for this term, that pupils seem settled and really happy to be back and that this will be a busy term with a parent consultation going live tonight at 6pm via Google meet. A template has been agreed for a report on each pupil tied into the learning powers at the school, the levels the pupils are working at and the support being provided for the core parts of the curriculum. This report will be distributed in June. P3 have designed a heritage trail where they can be heard telling the history of East Linton via QR codes at various locations. They have also started work with QMU drama department who are providing poet, actors and an audio company. Stories will be collected by the children from family or members of the community which will then be used in drama workshops to develop stories tied to local businesses with different chapters available at different locations. This project ties into the listening and talking work going on at school. P6 have started working with Catherine Wheels theatre group on a project on the subject of Islam where the first part involved a package being left with details of a bottle found in Whitby containing a message from the ancestors. The children were required to decipher the message and write back to 'Noreen'. They have responded in a very efficient manner in the belief this will ensure Noreen helps them. A weekly meeting will discuss what has been taken from that week's activity and to plan the next steps. The meeting was warned that people might see strange things appearing in the park!! Heather McDonald reported that there is no P7 camp this year but next week P7 will be involved in a week of activities with the outdoor learning team such as paddle sports on the Tyne, mountain biking on the John Muir trail, rock climbing at Traprain and tree climbing. Whilst

engaging in these activities they will be looking for links with the Skyhawk book they have been reading.

Gill Gardner reported that running club starts next week, P6 are taking part in a Euroquiz, P7 are taking part in the Rotary Quiz, there will be a literacy day in May and the outdoor class room is being used. The school is also hoping to have a sports day within the current guidelines.

Although the P7 show has had to be cancelled a creative event is being planned for a Friday afternoon where pupils will be presented with their yearbook and leavers book outside to allow parents to attend.

She reported the pupils are still operating in bubbles with tight rules on hand washing and sharing equipment.

Tracking meetings are ongoing as are Government standardised assessments for P1, P4 and P7. The Improvement Plan for next year is being worked on to highlight achievements from this year and to identify what has had to be carried forward to next year. This will include a government initiative on Children's rights in schools.

The PC were asked to encourage parents and carers to respond before June to the consultation and in general to any request from the school for feedback to allow staff to identify the priorities for improvements for next year and to confirm what is working and what is not. It is hoped that by the summer break there will be a joint consensus on what's being focussed on and how the PC can support that.

Lyn Jardine confirmed that communication can be an issue with limited personal conversations taking place and agreed to chase up website training for herself and Anne Hunter. Leigh Pleasance committed to send out her document of who's who in the PC once all pictures had been received and indicated that most of the representatives were members of WhatsApp year groups which seemed to work quite well.

Deborah Stitt asked when if the P1 letters were coming out confirming places and about the transition from nursery kids to P1. Gill Gardner confirmed details are on the way. Deborah Stitt asked if there would be a single P4 class next year and Gill Gardner responded that she was confident everyone would be happy with the class structure. Becca Bell asked if she could have the same confidence for P1/P2. Gill Gardner confirmed that there are lots of P1s but the class structure still looks nice and straightforward.

Margaret McKay reported that Stacy Walker has been chosen by the General Teaching Council to prepare a video about her training this year and has been put forward to present this to the East Lothian incoming probationers. This is good for Stacy's NQT year and also for school. Margaret McKay will also be involved with Gill Gardner in probationers training on talking to parents.

There was a general discussion on the intergenerational work which has been going on with delivery of VE day boxes and day centre visits and it was recognised that this benefits both generations with children learning they are part of wider community and that they should be

looking after others. It was agreed this should be continued with suggestions of pen-pals or regular community cafes.

8. Fundraising

Evie Thomas reported that a new e-mail address has been created for contributions towards the recipe book. The technical details such as what font to use will be distributed. Recipes and pictures should be submitted and the pictures will all be displayed as part of a grid on the front and back covers.

9. AOB

Gill Gardner highlighted a training event on building parent participation in education to take place online on Thu 3rd June 3.30 – 5pm at a cost of £15. Gill Gardner and Lyn Jardine will attend.

Leigh Pleasance agreed to distribute a communication to highlight the AGM.

10. Next meeting

AGM - Thursday 3rd June 7pm – 8.30pm – online via Google meet